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Campground Tree Wounds Cause Widespread Damage

PHOTO STORY NO. 32

What will it take to end the damage? A forest full of dying trees? Or the extinction of a beautiful species like the paper birch? Trees are constantly subject to injury by campers, hikers and other recreationists, who often don't realize that a seemingly small wound can be big trouble for the tree. Damage to any part of the tree - bark, leaves, branches, roots - can leave a wound that opens the way for disease, decay and death. Decayed trees are not only unsightly, but their weakened tissues are hazardous and low quality. Worldwide, more trees are damaged by decay than by any other cause, and wounds, if not properly treated, can easily lead to decay. The following photographs give graphic evidence of how recreationists in one National Forest needlessly abused trees. At the end are a few tips for tree lovers.

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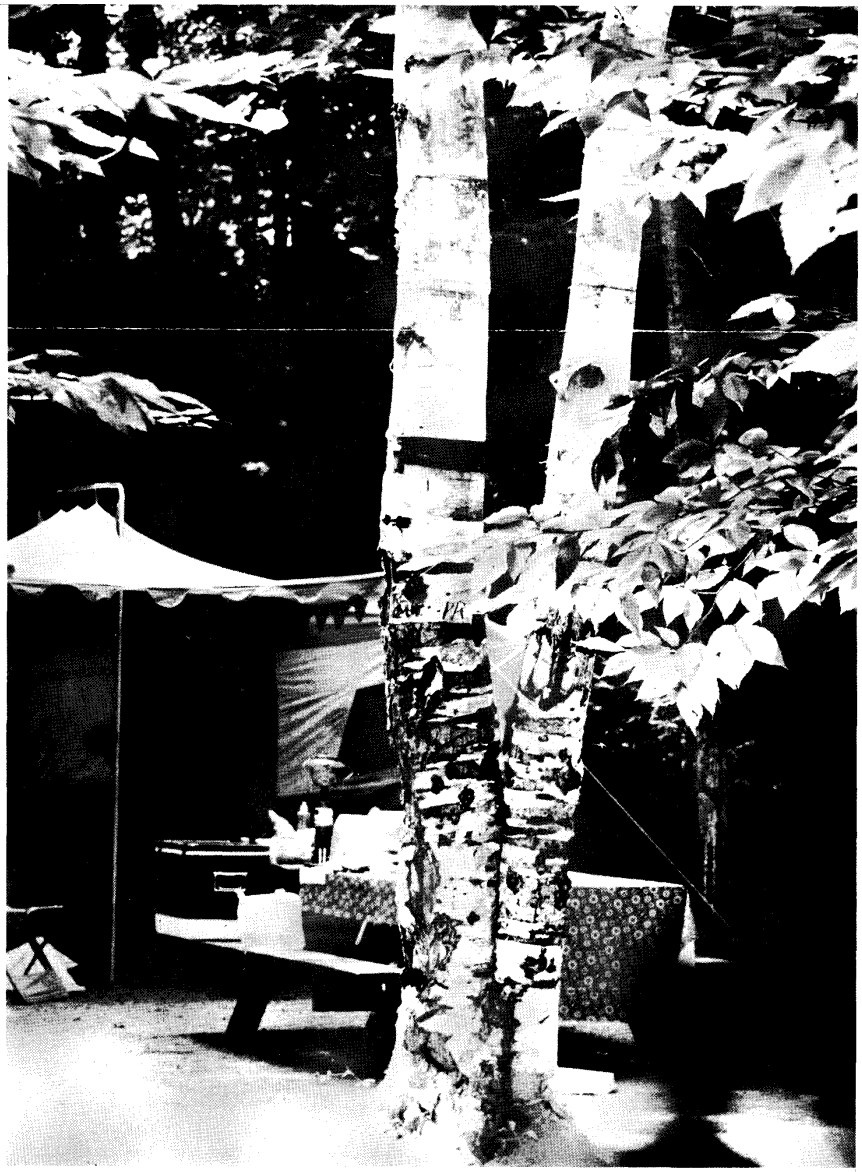
PHOTO STORY #32



A midsummer's nightmare.... many wounds are inflicted when a tree is most vulnerable, during the warm summer months. Damage can be deadly year-round, but by midsummer a tree has completed its annual above-ground growth and is entering dormancy. Also, insects and microorganisms are most concentrated in warm weather.

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A tree makes a handy clothesline pole, but maybe not for long. Trees are constructed in such a way that a wound inflicted completely around the tree girdles it and may cause it to die. These trees have also been stripped by souvenir hunters of much of their protective beautiful outer layer of bark.

Someone wanted to leave an impression. Well, anyway, the tree won't forget. Knife wounds, axe cuts and nail holes are open invitations for wood-destroying organisms to attack the tree. Weakened trees are prey for a wide variety of insects and microorganisms. Diseases that result in decay may set in. The larger the wound, the more rapidly the decay process moves. Trees may seem tough but, like humans, they can take only so much abuse before they wane and die.

TIPS FOR TREE LOVERS:

1. Build campfires as far away from trees as possible.

2. Use care when working or playing around trees to prevent accidental injury.

3. Use only dead, fallen twigs and branches for firewood.

4. To soften woodland slumber, make a bed of fallen leaves or fir needles. Leave living branches and leaves on the tree.

5. If wounding does occur, take the following steps to minimize damage:

   a. Remove dead and torn bark tissues.
   b. Shape the wound into an ellipse.
   c. Remove dead, dying and weak branches.

"Treat trees tenderly.
Be a friend of the forest!"